

Cooperative Early Childhood Programs **(Revised June 2002)**

As districts investigate the need for an early childhood education program within their community, it may be advantageous to explore the combination of various early childhood education services. This document provides examples for districts considering combining funds to offer appropriate early childhood activities. Funding sources may include Title I, Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), Missouri Preschool Project (MPP), Local Education Agency (LEA), and Line 14 monies.

In addition, LEAs are encouraged to coordinate the cooperative early childhood program with other district or community programs that focus on the care and education of preschool-age children and their families. These could include, but are not limited to, programs funded through an Early Childhood Child Care Development Fund Grant, Parents as Teachers, Even Start, Head Start, or migrant funding if the district has a migrant population.

All early childhood programs should provide a high quality, developmentally appropriate program that promotes the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of young children while responding to the needs of their families. Thoughtful planning in how to best meet the needs of children and families is essential for effective early childhood programs.

The following general guidelines apply to Title I, ECSE, and MPP:

Professional Development

The LEA must make appropriate professional development opportunities available to the early childhood staff and, when applicable, parents of participating students. To facilitate collaboration and the transition from one program to another, these professional development activities may include, when appropriate, the staff of Head Start, Parents as Teachers, and community childcare providers.

Other professional development opportunities may include, but are not limited to, college-credit courses, follow-up/advanced training of the selected curriculum model, professional conferences, seminars, study groups workshops, and a supportive system for mentoring regular and special education teachers.

Parent and Family Involvement

Regular, meaningful contacts with parents are an important component of any high quality, early childhood preschool program and are a requirement for a cooperative early childhood program.

Title I and MPP require that parents be offered personal contacts with the preschool staff, usually in the family's home. These contacts should facilitate the exchange of information about the child and his/her program, including the needs identified by the family and other information pertinent to the child's development. Many options exist for achieving contact with families such as home visits, coordination with Title I parent involvement activities, Parents as Teachers group meetings, and childcare programs operated in the district. Flexible scheduling and locations of visits should be considered in accordance with the special needs of families. For ECSE, parents must be informed of

their child's progress toward meeting the annual IEP goals at least as frequently as for non-disabled children.

Materials and Supplies

The cost of classroom materials and supplies is paid on a prorated basis according to program guidelines. The cost of specialized items needed to implement the IEPs of individual students is paid by ECSE. Equipment, defined as items costing over \$1000 per unit, is covered by LEA funds, or an alternate proposal may be submitted for consideration by the funding sources involved.

Certification

Title I teachers must be certificated in Early Childhood Education or ECSE. All teachers providing ECSE special education services must hold an ECSE certificate in order for the district to receive ECSE funding for that teacher. MPP requires a certificate in Early Childhood Education, ECSE, or a four-year child development degree.

Curriculum

Title I and MPP require one of three options for implementation: Project Construct, Creative Curriculum, or High Scope. For ECSE, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) places a strong emphasis on the participation of children with disabilities in the general education curriculum (for preschool children the law describes this as participation in appropriate activities). When an ECSE child is enrolled in an early childhood program such as Title I or MPP, the IEP goals and objectives/benchmarks should be aligned with the curriculum of the program in which the child will participate. Please refer to the Show Me How TA Bulletin "Choosing Preschool Curriculum" on the DESE Special Education Effective Practices Web page.

Audit Requirements

When a single education program is supported by multiple funding sources, LEAs must maintain records allowing a separate audit trail of each funding source.

Eligibility

Title I

As a result of a comprehensive needs assessment, a district may choose to use its existing Title I allocation for an early childhood education program designed for educationally disadvantaged three- and four-year-olds. Educationally disadvantaged children are defined as those whose educational attainment is below the level appropriate for children of their age. The selection of participants must be determined by a developmentally based, multiple criteria process developed by the LEA. LEAs are encouraged to use screening information from Parents as Teachers as a component of their multiple criteria. Students must be served in order of need.

ECSE

To be eligible for ECSE under the Young Child With A Developmental Delay (YCDD) category, preschool children must have significant delays affecting their educational

performance in one or more of the following areas:

1. Cognitive
2. Adaptive
3. Social/Emotional
4. Communication
5. Physical

A school district may also adopt a policy allowing the use of the other 15 disability categories for 3-5 year old children.

Additional information on eligibility requirements for ECSE can be found in the Missouri State Plan for Special Education and the Special Education Compliance Program Review Standards and Indicators Manual.

IEP services must commence on the child's third birthday when the referral date allows for this based on special education initial evaluation timelines. Refer to the Missouri State Plan for Special Education for information on transition from First Steps and summer birthday exceptions.

Missouri Preschool Project (HB 1519)

The Early Childhood Child Care Development Fund Grant was created to give parents meaningful choices and assistance in choosing the childcare and education arrangements appropriate for their family. "The fund shall be used to support programs that prepare children prior to the age in which they are eligible to enroll in kindergarten, pursuant to section 160.053, RSMo, to enter school ready to learn."

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has designated their portion of the fund to promote high quality early childhood education programs for children ages three and four. In accordance with the kindergarten entrance age, section 160.053, RSMo, which states a "child is eligible for admission to kindergarten if the child reaches the age of five before the first day of August," participants in the MPP program are required to reach age three or four by August 1 of the program year. The same guideline is suggested for Title I preschool students.

Program Examples

The following examples illustrate ways in which early childhood programs funded by Title I, ECSE, and MPP can be coordinated. These examples are not exhaustive, and LEAs are encouraged to explore options that might better fit their needs.

Example 1

All students are Title I eligible. Several ECSE students have IEPs which specify services be provided in the early childhood classroom. The ECSE special education teacher or therapist works in the classroom with the ECSE children on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. Personnel may also provide consultation to the classroom teacher and instructional assistant to support the inclusion of the children with IEPs. This itinerant approach would also work in a preschool classroom established with a Missouri Preschool Project grant.

Teacher Certification: The Title I preschool teacher is early childhood (EC) or early childhood special education (ECSE) certificated. The personnel working with ECSE students have appropriate special education credentials. The MPP preschool teacher has appropriate credentials as outlined by the Missouri Preschool Project.

Instructional Assistants: A Title I preschool class size of 11 to 15 students requires an instructional assistant who has 60 hours of college credit; a Title I preschool with 16 to 20 students requires two assistants. If funded with MPP funds, a preschool class of 11 to 20 students requires one assistant. Depending on the unique needs of the ECSE children, an additional paraprofessional or personal assistant may be required to implement one or more IEPs.

Salaries: The salaries of the Title I preschool teacher and instructional assistant are paid by Title I. The salaries of the itinerant teachers, therapists, paraprofessionals, or personal assistants implementing the IEP are paid by ECSE. The salaries of the MPP preschool teacher and teacher assistant are paid through the Missouri Preschool Project grant.

Materials and Supplies: The cost of general classroom materials and supplies is paid by Title I or MPP in accordance with established guidelines for each program. The cost of specialized items needed to implement the IEPs of individual students is paid by ECSE.

Example 2

A portion (approximately 2/3) of the students enrolled is Title I or MPP eligible and the remaining portion (approximately 1/3) is students with disabilities who are eligible for ECSE services. Classroom instruction and the implementation of strategies to meet the IEP objectives of the ECSE students are the responsibility of the certified ECSE classroom teacher and the instructional assistant (if class size requires one).

Teacher Certification: The teacher is ECSE certificated.

Instructional Assistant: A class with a total of 11-15 (Title I) or 11-20 (MPP) students requires an instructional assistant. Paraprofessionals and personal assistants may be employed to implement the IEPs of individual students if needed.

Salaries: The salaries of the teacher and instructional assistant are paid on a prorated basis by Title I or the MPP grant and ECSE. The salaries of any paraprofessionals and personal assistants hired to implement IEPs are paid by ECSE.

Materials and Supplies: The cost of general classroom materials and supplies is paid on a prorated basis according to Title I, MPP, and ECSE guidelines. The cost of specialized items needed to implement IEPs is paid by ECSE.

Example 3

Two or three classrooms are operating simultaneously: one Title I classroom and/or MPP classroom and one ECSE classroom. These individual classrooms coordinate instructional activities on a daily/regular basis. This may include integrated small and large group learning activities, co-teaching and collaborative teaching, and common planning time. This program design would allow children to move freely from one program to another based upon instructional needs.

Teacher certification and salaries: The teacher in the Title I preschool is EC or ECSE certificated and is paid by Title I. The teacher in the ECSE classroom is ECSE certificated and paid by ECSE. The MPP teacher is appropriately certificated and paid through the MPP grant.

Instructional Assistants and salaries: If class size requires, the instructional assistant in the Title I classroom is paid by Title I. Any needed paraprofessionals and personal assistants in the ECSE classroom are paid by ECSE. A teacher assistant in the MPP classroom, if required, is paid by the MPP grant.

Materials and supplies: The cost of general classroom items is paid by the respective programs.

Note: LEAs wishing to operate these or other cooperative early childhood programs should contact ECSE Special Education Funds Management, Title I, and/or Early Childhood staff at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for assistance in budget development.

Resources

Council for Exceptional Children-Division for Early Childhood (DEC)	(703) 620-3660 or 800-9456-CEC
Creative Curriculum	(800) 637-3652
Early Childhood Education <i>For Information about the Missouri Preschool Project, Parents as Teachers, and the Early Childhood Child Care Development Fund Grant</i>	(573) 751-2095
Early Childhood Special Education	(573) 751-0187
Special Education Effective Practices	(573) 751-4385
Even Start	(573) 526-3232
Head Start Federal Regional Office	(816) 426-5401
Quality Improvement Center for Developmental Disabilities for Head Start	(913) 281-7770
High/Scope	(313) 485-2000 or 800-40PRESS
Migrant Education	(573) 526-3232
Missouri Board for Accreditation of Childhood Education Programs	(573) 876-2321
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)	(800) 424-2460

Parents as Teachers National Center	(314) 432-4330
Project Construct National Center	(800) 335-7262
Title I	(573) 751-2643
MO Head Start Collaboration Office	(573) 443-8709
Department of Health and Senior Services	(573) 751-2450

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